1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

FORCED LABOR

I. RECRUITMENT AND SIZE OF FORCED LABOR

The organization and employment of forced labor, including both conscript and civilian and prisoner labor, in the Central-South provinces follow the same pattern in the country as a whole.[1] Consequently, as far as prisoner labor is concerned, the forced labor contingents in the Central-South area are also recruited from (1) members of the "landlord" and "rich peasant" classes during the "land reform" program, which was completed in 1952, (2) "counterrevolutionaries" sentenced under the drive begun after the entry of Communist China in the Korean war, (3) and "criminals" sentenced under the "Three-Anti" and "Five-Anti" campaigns. Probably the largest number of recruits are derived from "counterrevolutionaries" and "landlords."

According to a report by Teng Tzu-hui, then Chairman of the Central-South Military and Political Committee, dated November 21, 1951,[2] "counterrevolutionaries" were dealt with in two broad categories--those whose sins against "the people" were written in blood and those whose crimes were less grievous. People in the first category were given the death

1. The employment of forced labor, recruited from among the state's active and potential opponents, on economic projects in which mass labor and/or cheap labor can be used advantageously as an integral part of the country's economic planning is derived from Soviet experience. The general philosophy has been consistently expressed in Mao Tse-tung's "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," the Common

[continued on following page]

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

sentence, which, in a number of cases, was stayed for a period of two years so as to permit the prisoners "reform through labor." People in the second category were placed under surveillance and were also required to "reform through labor." This practice in the Central-South, while doubtless reflecting general practice, anticipated some of the provisions in the national Regulations Governing Reform-through-Labor, promulgated on August 26, 1954.[3]

During 1951, according to Ten Tzu-hui, of all persons arrested in Central-South China, 28 per cent were put to death; 2 per cent were given death sentences which were suspended so that the prisoners could "reform through labor"; 50 per cent were required to "reform through labor" while under detention, including persons awaiting trial; the remaining 20 per cent were placed under surveillance and were also obliged to "reform through labor." Thus some 72 per cent of the region's prisoners were recruited into forced labor contingents. In addition

---

[Footnote No. 1 continued]
Program of 1949, and the 1954 Constitution. Since any civilian who refuses to answer the draft of the state to perform labor automatically becomes a "counterrevolutionary," there is no clear distinction between civilian labor and prisoner labor except in the manner of recruitment and the possibility that non-prisoner labor may on occasions receive wage payment.

2. Ch'ang-chiang Jih-pao [Yangtze Daily], Hankow, December 13, 1951.

3. Jen-min Jih-pao [People's Daily], Peking. September 7, 1954.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

697

to the above groups, a number of persons not formally under arrest were put under surveillance and required to render labor service. These totaled about one-half of the number of all persons arrested. An unconfirmed estimate put the number of persons drawn into forced labor during 1951 in Central-South China at 1.9 million.[4] A Taiwan report has estimated the cumulative total of all persons engaged in forced labor at one time or another from the end of 1949 to 1954 at 42.3 million for the country as a whole.[5] If the share of the Central-South provinces is at all proportionate to the population ratio, the five-year (1950-1954) cumulative total would be in the neighborhood of 12.7 million. Obviously, these figures can neither be confirmed nor, for that matter, conclusively refuted.

Under the 1954 forced labor regulations, workers are organized in prisons, detention houses, institutions for young delinquents and "reform-through-labor" corps. This grouping corresponds to the classification of prisoners given by Teng Tzu-hui -- persons whose death sentence has been suspended work in prisons; persons awaiting trial or sentence, or serving a sentence of two years or less, work in detention houses; all other "counterrevolutionaries" except young prisoners (13-18 years old) who can be trusted to work under minimum security conditions work in units of the "reform-through-labor" corps.

It may be safely assumed that there are prisons, detention houses, and institutions for delinquent

4. Cheng Chu-yüan, Chung-kung Ti Nu-kung Chih-tu [The Slave Labor System of the Chinese Communists] , Hong Kong, Tzu-yu ch'u-pan-she, 1952, p. 76.

5. Fei-ch'u Nu-kung Kai-shu [Survey of the Forced Labor in Communist China] , Taipei, Chung-yang wei-yuan-hui ti-liu-tsu, December 1954.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

697

youths scattered throughout the Central-South provinces. Workers in these institutions are more or less restricted to their place of detention. There is no official account of the location and number of prisons. However, according to 1948 statistics, there were 556 prisons and detention houses in the Central-South provinces.[6] Since the 1954 regulations governing forced labor provide for the establishment of detention houses at the hsien level, it may be assumed that there are a minimum of 664 prisons and detention houses in the 618 hsien and 46 municipalities of the area. The actual number is likely to be appreciably larger. On the other hand, units of "reform-through-labor" corps are highly mobile. Subject to the overall control of the national Ministry of Public Security and its agencies, they may be transferred to places where cheap mass labor may be used, and are often found on important construction sites within the Central-South. Some of the activities in which forced labor has been engaged will be briefly described in the following sections.

II. THE CHING-CHIANG PROJECT (HUPEH AND HUNAN)

466
731
653

The section of the Yangtze between Chih-chiang in Hupeh and Ch'eng-ling'chi in Hunan, also known as the Ching-chiang, is the site of a major water-

6. Chung-hua Min-kuo T'ung-chi Nien-chien [Statistical Yearbook of China], Nanking, Bureau of Statistics, 1948, p. 392.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

in Kwangtung to Shang-hang in Fukien and the one from Ch'ing-yüan to Fo-kang in Kwangtung. The location of mass labor contingents in the future will doubtless depend upon the selection of the routes to be built.

IV. A TYPICAL "REFORM-THROUGH-LABOR" CAMP IN CANTON

Railway and highway building, as well as construction of large water conservation projects, are all examples of the concentrated employment of mass labor. A somewhat different case is found in the employment in Kwangtung of forced-labor groups in various agricultural, mining, and industrial undertakings. A typical case is provided by the "reform-through-labor" units under the direction of the Canton Public Security Bureau.[14]

According to the Canton Public Security Bureau, at one time, municipal construction received the largest allocation of labor force under the control of the Bureau. However, the prisoners were also put to work in producing bricks and tiles, reclaiming waste land, planting fruit trees and food and commercial crops, raising farm animals, and manufacturing various handicraft products, including rope and wooden and bamboo wares.

The bureau stressed that forced labor was supplemented by political education. Many prisoners were

13. Chung-yang Ts'ai-ching Cheng-ts'e Fa-ling Hui-pien [Compilation of Laws and Regulations Concerning Financial and Economic Policies], Vol. III, Peking, Ts'ai-ching wei'yüan-hui, 1952, pp. 713-15.
14. Ta-kung Pao, Hong Kong, December 15, 1951.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

said to have been lazy when they first joined the "reform-through-labor" camps. Some attempted to use illness as an excuse to stay away from work while others tried to escape or even committ suicide. According to the Bureau, these conditions were surmounted by pointing out to the prisoners that "reform-through-labor" was the only way to start a new life, and political indoctrination was conducted by organizing the prisoners in groups studying systematically the history of social development, the people's democratic dictatorship, the new philosophy of life and the achievements of the People's Government during recent years.

According to the same report, prisoners were classified into separate groups according to the terms of sentence, age, phsyical condition, and former occupation. A brief period of work training was usually provided. Definite norms or quotas, which had to be observed by the prisoners in their work, were fixed in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Labor competitions were organized, and criticisms and commendations of individual workers were published in wall newspapers.

The report contended that as a result of "reform-through-labor" some prisoners worked very hard and changed their ideological outlook and were either given special rewards or had their sentences reduced, while others who refused to reform were punished. Especially interesting is the statement that after five months of forced labor and political education, most of the "counter-revolutionaries" had changed their ideological points of view and had acquired the habit of working. The Bureau also re-

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

ported that prisoners released from the camps were sent back to their villages to start a new life, while those without homes were sent to production reformatories.

The report on Canton is probably representative of many a "reform-through-labor" camp. Life in such camps is described as serene, productive, and not at all harsh. "As to the prisoner's daily life, every farm has its own reading room. Officers in charge have taught them to sing. Every Saturday night there is either a discussion meeting or a recreation program. Proper attention is paid to diet and hygienic condition..." [15] Official Communists comments have also occasionally pointed to individual instances in which persons were said to have regained their physical health and spiritual well-being as a result of ideological reform and physical labor. [16]

The official account mentioned above does not agree with some other reports on treatment within such camps. One such report, for instances, states that prisoners in Canton labor camps received in 1952 only 12 shih-liang (about 13.2 ounces) of rice per day, [17] supplemented with only such vegetables as the prisoners grew themselves. The daily food

15. Nan-fang Jih-pao [Southern Daily], Sept. 8, 1951.

16. Ibid.

17. Thirteen and two-tenths ounces of rice are equivalent to 1,270 calories, which is below the level of normal subsistence.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

697

ration for each prisoner was valued at ¥ 1,500 (old currency, approximately 6-1/2 cents in U.S. currency). In the same period the wage of the lowest-paid workers in industrial enterprises in Central-South China amounted to 100 "wage units" a month, each unit being equivalent to about ¥ 2,800 (approximately 12 cents in U.S. currency). This means that the prisoner's monthly wage amounted to some 16 wage units or about 16 per cent of the earnings of the lowest-paid industrial worker.[18]

V. OTHER "REFORM-THROUGH-LABOR" CAMPS IN KWANGTUNG, KWANGSI, AND KIANGSI

Some scattered reports on a few labor camps in Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Kiangsi are also available. These may be mentioned below:

1. The Ch'ü-chiang (Kwangtung) labor camp, which started with 1,190 prisoners in February 1951, had 3,500 prisoners in June of the same year. The latter were drawn from the ten hsien on the Pei-chiang (North River) and consisted of "counter-revolutionaries" serving long sentences. They were employed on construction and agricultural production. A group of 100 prisoners was reported to share one face towel and one tooth brush. Freedom of movement was completely absent, and guards were posted even along passages leading to lavatories. Prisoners were warned against casting sidelong glances, which might be interpreted

18. Tsu-kuo Chou-k'an [China Weekly], Hong Kong, Vol. IV, no. 13, June 28, 1954, pp. 11-14.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

as planning for escape.[19]

2. The Shun-te (Kwangtung) camp, established in May 1951, is located in a valley outside the city limits. It contains major "counterrevolutionaries" serving sentences of more than 15 years. The number of camp inmates grow from an initial 3,000 to 30,000 by the end of 1951. The daily ration consisted of 12 shih-liang (13.2 ounces) of rice per person plus one kind of vegetable. Communication with the outside world was completely prohibited.[20]

3. The Ts'ung-hua (Kwangtung) camp, established in January 1951, contained only 500 prisoners organized into 18 groups. The prisoners were assigned to land reclamation, vegetable gardening, and manufacture of handicraft products.[21]

4. The Chan-chiang (Kwangtung) camp, established in October 1951, had 2,500 prisoners engaged in the construction of some small water works.[22]

In addition to the above, other "reform-through-labor" camps are known to exist at Ying-teh, Lien-hsien, Yun-fu, Chiao-ling, and Ho-p'ing in Kwangtung province, as well as on Hainan Island, and about 60,000 prisoners are working on the

19. Li, T'ien-min, Wu-nien-lai Chung-kung P'o-hai Jen-ch'üan Chi-shih [Facts about the Violation of the Human Rights by the Chinese Communists in the Past Five Years], Taiwan, March 1955, pp. 25, 30.

20. Ibid., p. 31. Also: Chin-jih Shih-chieh [World Today], Hong Kong, June 15, 1952, p. 24.

21. Cheng, Chu-yuan, op. cit., p. 77.

22. Ibid.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

state farms in Lo-ting, Weng-yüan, Lo-ch'ang, Jen-hua, and Nan-hsiang in Kwangtung. The total prisoner population in Kwangtung was said to number 400,000 in 1953,[23] and similar reports are available concerning Kwangsi and Kiangsi.

VI. STATE FARM IN HONAN

According to a Taiwan report, there were about 100,000 "counterrevolutinaries" undergoing "reform-through-labor" in Honan Province during 1953.[24] In addition to water conservation work on the upper course of the Hwai River, some of the prisoners work on state farms. One example may be found in the report of three American POW's who refused repatriation after the Korean War, but returned to this country in 1955.[25]

The 1,500-acre state farm where they worked is located in Honan. It had 35 tractors and 965 laborers sent there for political reorientation from other parts of the country. All laborers worked 9 hours a day and six days a week. Food was said to be of the average Chinese standard. The monthly wage of an ordinary laborer was between ¥ 150,000 and ¥ 200,000 (old currency), the equivalent of US$6-8. All expenses except housing had to be met by the individuals. Political education, lasting several hours a day, followed a

23. Fei-tang Hsun-lien Ti P'ou-hsi [An Analytical Study of Indoctrination of the Communist Party], Taipei, Chung-yang wei-yuan-hui ti-ssu-tsu, March 1953, p. 14. 24. Ibid.

25. "Turncoat GI's Tell Story of Red China," U.S. News and World Report, July 22, 1955, pp. 21-26, 113-15.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

definite program which in this case was: Monday review of world affairs; Tuesday, discussion of the world situation; Wednesday, criticism of individuals; Thursday, China's internal situation; Friday, criticism of individuals again; Saturday, the discussion of the criticisms for the whole week. The "criticism of individuals" is what the people on the farm feared most, because when a person came up for criticism, his fate was virtually sealed. Fear of the leader and fear of each other constitute an essential part of political re-education.

VII. COMMENTS

Although official Communist Chinese sources have been notably reticent on the development of "reform-through-labor" establishments in individual areas which are sometimes camouflaged by being called factories,[26] such information as is available in connection with the Central-South provinces points to certain considerations to which attention may be directed. It is entirely possible that these characteristics are by no means restricted to conditions in the Central-South.

1. "Reform-through-labor" establishments such as the ones in Central-South China serve the dual purpose of providing political punishment and large reserve pools of cheap labor, endowed in the majority of cases with high mobility. The presence

26. Freedom Front, Hong Kong, April 25, 1955, p. 22.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

of the former consideration leads inevitably to excessive discipline, overwork, and probably a high incidence of sickness and mortality. However, these establishments should not be generally identified with extermination camps, because there are occasional releases in the case of lesser "criminals." Extermination is reserved only for the politically incorrigible, and the differentiation between those who can be reformed and those who cannot is an effective means of bringing about the acceptance of the Communist ideology. Where no practical alternative is available, outward acceptance may in time become genuine acceptance. In this connection knowledge about life within the refugee camps in Hong Kong and of escapees from Communist China in general can be of major influence on propaganda about forced labor in Communist China.

466
697

2. Conscript labor is not unknown in Chinese history. What is significant in the Communist Chinese practice is the length of service, integration of forced labor into national economic planning, and the systematic liquidation of political opposition to the ruling party. The combination of these factors serves to identify the Communist Chinese system of forced labor with the methods of Soviet dictatorship, a fact which can be profitably pointed out.

3. The harsh treatment of prisoners doing forced labor may be compared with the extremely low wages of that part of free labor which is worst paid. The disparity in real "wages" poses a serious threat to free labor inasmuch as it is a powerful factor in labor discipline. The lack of a clear-cut distinction between conscript labor and prisoner labor and the flexibility of the term "counterrevolutionary" must be fairly obvious to all workers.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF14 Central China AF14

466
697

Consequently, it would be futile merely to point to wage and other differences between free and forced labor in present-day Communist China without presenting a third alternative.

4. Much of the worst aspect of forced labor, such as the working conditions of water-conservation workers on the Ching-chiang project, owes its origin to the complete lack of mechanical tools and equipment. This is a situation inherent in the present stage of Chinese economic development. However, it may be conveniently related to the limited scope of Soviet assistance and used as a wedge in undermining Soviet-Chinese relations.